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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [ETRD](#) [KCRM](#) [SNAR](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: 202KG HEROIN SEIZED IN DRUG BUST

CLASSIFIED BY: Paul Sutphin, Consul General, Consulate Dubai,
UAE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) During a joint Sharjah/Dubai police drug raid dubbed "Operation 888" (the raid occurred on August 8, 2008), officers seized 202 kilograms of heroin (worth \$11 million) and arrested 19 Afghans in the what the media describes as the region's largest drug bust to date. One of the arrested suspects supposedly admitted to police that he owned the drugs and had already sold 25 kilograms to three UAE residents of differing nationalities.

¶2. (U) According to press reports, a tip that Sharjah's industrial zone was serving as re-packaging and transshipment points for drugs moving through Sharjah and Dubai, led police to conduct August 8th raids on several warehouses and apartments. Reports claimed that the drugs were hidden in false compartments inside the fuel tanks of imported large trucks. Police caught several suspects in the act of loading the trucks for transshipment out of the UAE, while others were arrested at several sites where the modified trucks, and some modified fuel tanks, were stored. Seven vehicles were seized and are being tested. In addition to the drugs, police also confiscated weighing scales and plastic bags used in re-packaging.

¶3. (C/NF) According to Post DEA Attachi sources, the drugs were shipped in concealed compartments, with 40 to 50 kilograms capacity, located in the trucks' transmission boxes (the traffickers were in the process of modifying the fuel tanks to gain greater capacity per truck in preparation for another shipment). The operation appears to have been in effect for the past three months, with trucks being loaded in Karachi, shipped via the Makran coast to Dubai, where they were off-loaded and then subsequently sent back to Karachi for another load. In Dubai, the Afghans were selling the drugs to Nigerians and Kenyans who then used mules to transship the heroin to China. DEA is working with local law enforcement to follow-up on telephone numbers/records found in the possession of the arrested traffickers.

¶4. (C) Comment: According to Post's DEA attachi, UAE officials typically downplay drug busts, claiming the narcotics are being transshipped and not sold locally. The mention of 25 kilograms of local sales might be an indication that police are taking local usage more seriously. Police statements, such as the one made by Col. Abdullah Mubarak al Dukhan (deputy director of Sharjah police), "This has put it clear that we are no longer a small consumer market for drugs, but at risk of becoming a hub for drug business if we don't double our efforts to eliminate this crime", highlight a far bigger concern: evidence indicates the UAE is not becoming, but already is and has been for some

time a major transshipment hub for narcotics, with similarly large quantities of narcotics moving through the UAE's various ports and free zones regularly. DEA will continue to work with UAE and individual emirate authorities to increase narcotics-related law enforcement efforts. End comment.

SUTPHIN